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Testimony by

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Provided to

**Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC**

July 27, 2001

Good morning, Chairwoman Morella and Members of the committee. I am Tom Voltaggio, Acting Regional Administrator for the EPA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office. I am pleased to be here today to discuss EPA's role in the Spring Valley cleanup.

EPA's active involvement with Spring Valley started when Region III, in conjunction with the Army, conducted an emergency response to Spring Valley in 1993. Since then, the Agency has provided critical skills and technical expertise in what is an extraordinarily complex cleanup effort. The Agency has decided to test for a full suite of possible contaminants and this decision helped in eventually uncovering the arsenic problem. Our efforts to promote keeping the site open for further investigation and gathering the right data for an accurate risk assessment have also been important factors in the cleanup effort.

In January, 1993, a utility contractor working in the Spring Valley development encountered buried ordnance. A textbook emergency response followed, with the Army, EPA and District government responding. DOD sent an emergency response team that removed 141 ordnance-related items in what became known as the Phase I cleanup. The Corps was ready a month later to start Phase II, the long-term cleanup effort.

Arsenic is a breakdown product from some of the chemical weapons that were used at American University. The Corps did not sample for arsenic, however, because there are other unique compounds that would provide a clearer indication of chemical warfare agents. EPA, though, decided to test for all hazardous substances including arsenic. It wasn't until much later in the history of Spring

Valley that this decision would prove decisive.

By 1995, hundreds of properties had been investigated, but only a few more ordnance pieces were found and there had been no discovery of burial pits. More than 250 soil samples had been tested, but no chemical or explosive agents were found. A few metals were identified, but a risk assessment concluded that additional cleanup was not required.

An investigation of suspected Mustard Gas in the soil was still underway at the “Captain Rankin” property. The Corps proposed that all the other locations in Spring Valley be considered Operable Unit 1, a term we use to designate a study area, and that the ‘Captain Rankin’ area, be classified as Operable Unit 2, or OU #2. The Army then concluded that no further action was required with respect to chemical warfare materials/munitions for OU #1. The Corps documented its rationale and put it out for public comment. Both EPA and the District supported this decision.

As the work on OU #2 continued, DC government undertook an independent archival search that turned up new information. EPA was unaware that DC was involved in such an effort until November, 1996 when DC called us to express concerns about several issues including possible mis-location of a burial pit.

In the Spring of 1997, the Corps, EPA, and DC agreed to form a Spring Valley project team, and EPA wrote to the Corps noting that “close-out of the entire Spring Valley site should . . . be deferred until . . . resolution of the . . . concerns . . . raised by the District of Columbia.”

By January, 1998, the Corps became convinced about the location of an additional burial pit and created OU #3, to focus on the Korean Ambassador’s residence, including a soil sampling plan. At the same time, EPA prepared a plan to sample – and resample – adjacent properties.

Several different strands of the story were finally starting to converge. Based on information developed to that date, the team found the burial pit on the Ambassador’s property and an intensive and gradually expanding circle of soil sampling was finding arsenic and leading to the eventual decision this Spring to assess every property in Spring Valley.

As part of the massive sampling and resampling effort that is currently underway at 1200 locations, every homeowners will be mailed a copy of the results from his or her property within 45 days of the sample being taken.

Conclusion

EPA’s original photographic interpretation work is still helping to guide our work today. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the other organizations that have been involved in this cleanup effort. From the time I arrived at the site in 1993 to present, I have been extremely impressed by the hard work and dedication of the Army and the Corps in the Spring Valley cleanup. They have

provided a high level of expertise to this effort. The District of Columbia also deserves special praise. The research conducted by some of its staff in 1995 and 1996 has given other team members extremely valuable information.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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